

2026 water sharing plans omnibus amendment order

A summary of changes made to multiple water sharing plans.

The department is proposing to add several new provisions and make further minor changes to all water sharing plans (plans) across the state.

Many of the proposed new provisions have already been applied to recently replaced plans and are now being included across all remaining plans for consistency. Other amendments are proposed to improve the implementation of plans or correct errors. As summarised in the tables below, the draft order includes proposed amendments related to:

- Water quality objectives and performance indicators (Table 1)
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting (Table 2)
- LTAAEL determination, publication, compliance and sustainable extraction review (Table 3)
- Specific access licence exemptions (Table 4)
- Overland flow and connectivity (Table 5)
- Minimum inflows review (Table 6)
- Prescribed wetlands (Table 7)
- Yanco Creek Modernisation Project and access licence dealing rules (Table 8)
- Protection of environmental water (Table 9).
- Maintenance of in-river dams (Table 10).

Including these amendments as part of a single package is an efficient way for the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department) to progress plan improvements. The proposed changes are consistent with the principles of the *Water Management Act 2000* (WM Act) and will improve the sustainability of water management in NSW. Plans are proposed to be amended under sections 45 (1) (a) and (b) of the WM Act, which enable the Minister for Water to make changes to plans if it is in the public interest, or if the relevant plan provides for such an amendment. The Minister for Water must obtain the concurrence of the Minister for the Environment before making an amendment (section 45 (3) of the WM Act).

Table 1. Summary of changes related to water quality objectives and performance indicators

Plan and plan part	Proposed change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plans: These provisions apply to all plans. This amendment adds the provisions to all plans where they are not already included. These are: <i>Bega River Area regulated, unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Richmond River Area regulated, unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Towamba River unregulated & alluvial,</i> <i>Coffs Harbour Area unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Greater Metropolitan Region unregulated,</i> <i>Hunter unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Lower North Coast unregulated & alluvial,</i> <i>Tweed River Area unregulated & alluvial.</i></p> <p>Plan part: Vision, objectives, strategies and performance indicators</p>	<p>We are proposing to add a water quality objective and performance indicator to support water-dependent ecosystems and social, cultural and economic values, to plans where it is not already included.</p>	<p>These amendments incorporate the requirement for plans to consider how water quality can be improved. Applying the water quality objectives and performance indicator to all plans provides consistency.</p>

Table 2. Summary of changes related to monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plans: These provisions are proposed to apply to all plans. This amendment adds the provisions to all plans where they are not already included. These are:</p> <p><i>Bega River Area regulated, unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Richmond River Area regulated, unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Bellinger River Area unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Brunswick unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Central Coast unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Clarence River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Clyde River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Coffs Harbour Area unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Darling Alluvial groundwater,</i> <i>Deua River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Greater Metropolitan Region groundwater,</i> <i>Greater Metropolitan Region unregulated,</i> <i>Gwydir alluvial groundwater,</i> <i>Gwydir regulated river,</i> <i>Hastings unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Hunter regulated river,</i> <i>Hunter unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Lachlan alluvial groundwater,</i> <i>Lachlan regulated river,</i> <i>Lower North Coast unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Macleay unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Macquarie and Cudgegong regulated rivers,</i> <i>Macquarie-Castlereagh groundwater,</i></p>	<p>We are proposing to include a requirement to prepare a monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) plan for all water sharing plans. The plan is designed to link with the objectives, strategies and performance indicators and is to be published by 31 December 2026..</p> <p>We are also proposing a requirement to publicly report on the implementation of the water sharing plan each year, including progress against the MER plan, with the first of these reports to be published by 31 December 2026. A new provision will require public reporting on the results of the monitoring and evaluation undertaken according to the MER plan, by year 9 of the plan term.</p>	<p>Annual reporting will provide transparency on how a plan is performing against its vision, objectives, strategies and whether performance indicators are met. Providing this information by year 9 will enable it to be considered when a plan is replaced at year 10 of its term.</p>

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p><i>Murray alluvial groundwater,</i> <i>Murrumbidgee alluvial groundwater,</i> <i>Murrumbidgee regulated river,</i> <i>Nambucca unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Namoi alluvial groundwater,</i> <i>NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated rivers,</i> <i>North Coast coastal sands groundwater,</i> <i>North Coast fractured and porous rock groundwater,</i> <i>NSW Border Rivers alluvial groundwater,</i> <i>NSW Border Rivers regulated river,</i> <i>NSW Great Artesian Basin groundwater,</i> <i>NSW Great Artesian Basin shallow groundwater,</i> <i>NSW Murray Darling Basin fractured rock groundwater,</i> <i>NSW Murray Darling Basin porous rock groundwater,</i> <i>Paterson regulated river,</i> <i>Peel regulated river,</i> <i>Snowy Genoa unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>South Coast groundwater,</i> <i>Towamba River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Tuross River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Tweed River Area unregulated and alluvial</i></p> <p>Plan part: Vision, objectives, strategies and performance indicators.</p>		

Table 3. Summary of changes related to LTAAEL determination, publication, compliance and sustainable extraction review

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plans: The requirement for the determination of a numeric Long Term Annual Average Extraction Limit (LTAAEL) applies to all inland unregulated plans, excluding the Barwon-Darling plan which has a modelled LTAAEL. This amendment adds the provisions to all inland unregulated plans, except those being remade in 2025/2026. These are:</p> <p><i>Castlereagh unregulated river,</i> <i>Intersecting Streams unregulated river,</i> <i>NSW Border Rivers unregulated river</i> <i>Lower Murray-Darling unregulated river,</i> <i>North Western unregulated and fractured rock,</i> <i>Murray unregulated river.</i></p> <p>Plan parts: Limits to the availability of water, Amendments of this plan.</p>	<p>We are completing work to calculate a numeric LTAAEL value for inland unregulated plans. The numeric LTAAEL will replace a definitional (rule based) LTAAEL to improve transparency and clarity regarding the allowable volume of take. The numeric LTAAEL value specifies the amount of water that can be taken from the extraction management units by licence holders within a specified time. The proposed change includes a completion date of 31 December 2026 for the determination of a numeric LTAAEL, the requirement to request the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to provide advice on the method used to establish the numeric LTAAEL, and to publish the numeric LTAAEL. We are also proposing a provision to review the LTAAEL to determine if it represents a sustainable level of take by 1 July 2030. The considerations for the review include, but are not limited to, future climate projections and Basin Plan Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs). There will also be a requirement for the NRC to review and provide advice on the findings. We propose to update an existing provision that allows for the plan to be amended based on the sustainable LTAAEL review by 31</p>	<p>The LTAAEL is used to enable the long-term objectives of NSW water sharing plans to be met. It is designed to protect water resources, water dependent ecosystems and communities from the impacts of over-extraction in the longer term. It also reinforces the value of water, supports the water market and the integrity of tradeable water entitlements. The calculation, review and publishing of a numeric LTAAEL will provide transparency to water users and improve the ability of water sharing plans to manage competing demands. The LTAAEL review is a key piece of work to ensure that the level of extraction is sustainable into the future considering many factors including climate change.</p>

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
	<p>December 2031 (unless extended) for the purpose of achieving a sustainable level of take. The North Western unregulated and fractured rock plan already has multiple numeric LTAAELs and hence is only being amended to update the sustainable LTAAEL review provision.</p>	
<p>Plans: These provisions apply to all inland unregulated plans, excluding the Barwon-Darling plan which has a modelled LTAAEL. This amendment adds the provisions to all relevant inland unregulated plans, except those being remade in 2025/2026. These are:</p> <p><i>Murrumbidgee unregulated river, Castlereagh unregulated river, Intersecting Streams unregulated river, Lower Murray-Darling unregulated river, Murray unregulated river, Northwestern unregulated and fractured rock, Border Rivers unregulated river.</i></p> <p>Plan parts: Requirements for water, Limits to the availability of water.</p>	<p>To calculate a numeric LTAAEL value for inland unregulated plans it is necessary to estimate the allowable volume of water to be taken under harvestable rights provisions.</p> <p>We are proposing updates to text to clarify that the requirement for water under harvestable rights, to be used to establish the numeric LTAAEL, is to be based on the level of development at the commencement of the plan.</p>	<p>Clarifying the volume of harvestable rights to be used in the LTAAEL will improve the ability of the water sharing plan to manage growth.</p>

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plans: Proposed provisions apply to all coastal surface water plans. These are:</p> <p><i>Bega River Area regulated, unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Richmond River Area regulated, unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Hunter regulated river,</i> <i>Paterson regulated river,</i> <i>Brunswick unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Clarence River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Deua River unregulated and alluvium</i> <i>Macleay unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Nambucca unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Snowy Genoa unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Towamba River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Tuross River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Clyde River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Bellinger River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Central Coast unregulated and alluvial</i> <i>Hastings unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Coffs Harbour Area unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Greater Metropolitan Region unregulated,</i> <i>Hunter unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Lower North Coast unregulated and</i></p>	<p>All coastal plans have had a numeric LTAAEL determined. This amendment includes provisions to review this LTAAEL as part of the work to determine a sustainable level of take. The provisions are to publish a sustainable level of take within two years of the determination. Then to consider plan rules to achieve that level of take and then amend the plan if required. We will also remove wording in amendment provisions of 2022 and 2023 water sharing plans that restrict amendments if they substantially impact on the LTAAEL.</p>	<p>The sustainable extraction review is part of a project for coastal valleys that will guide and inform the sustainable management of extraction in NSW coastal unregulated and alluvial and regulated water sharing plan areas. The inclusion of this clause enables the department to review the plans to consider and implement the outcomes of the sustainable extraction project.</p>

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p><i>alluvial,</i> <i>Tweed River Area unregulated</i></p> <p>Plan part: Limits to the availability of water</p>		
<p>Plans: Proposed provisions apply to inland regulated river plans, except the Upper and Lower Namoi regulated plan that already had this provision included in 2024. The plans included in this amendment are:</p> <p><i>Gwydir regulated river,</i> <i>Lachlan regulated river,</i> <i>Macquarie and Cudgegong regulated river,</i> <i>Murrumbidgee regulated river,</i> <i>NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated rivers,</i> <i>NSW Border Rivers regulated river,</i> <i>Peel regulated river.</i></p> <p>Plan parts: Limits to the availability of water, Amendment of this Plan</p>	<p>All inland regulated plans have modelled LTAAEL values calculated annually. We propose to include a requirement for a review of the modelled LTAAEL values to determine whether they represent a sustainable level of take by 1 July 2028. Similar to the review requirements for unregulated plans, the considerations for the review include, protection of dependant ecosystems and species, including connected water sources, future climate projections, precautionary principle and adaptive management, cultural social and economic implications and the review of the Basin Plan and SDLs. There is a requirement for the NRC to review and provide advice on the findings. Inclusion of a provision that the plan may be amended to achieve a sustainable level of extraction and consider and adapt to climate change having regard to the sustainable LTAAEL review. We will also include a note to include the latest published</p>	<p>The review of LTAAEL to determine whether it represents a sustainable level of take is a key piece of work for NSW that has already been included in inland unregulated water sharing plans, extending these provisions to inland regulated water sharing plans will improve consistency. The department calculates the LTAAEL each year and publishes on the website here: https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/allocations-availability/extraction-limits/tracking-surface-water/ltaael-compliance-results. The values for the 2023/24 water year are being included in the water sharing plans for improved transparency.</p>

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
	results for modelled numeric LTAAEL value.	
<p>Plans: Proposed changes apply to the inland regulated plans that have triggers that refer explicitly to CAP compliance provisions. These include: <i>Macquarie and Cudgegong regulated river,</i> <i>Gwydir regulated river,</i> <i>Upper Namoi and Lower Namoi regulated river,</i> <i>Lachlan regulated river,</i> <i>Murrumbidgee regulated river,</i> <i>Murray and Lower Darling regulated river.</i></p> <p>Plan part: Limits to the availability of water</p>	<p>The Cap is an extraction limit defined in Schedule E of the Murray Darling Basin Agreement (2013). Cap compliance is being replaced by SDL compliance under the Basin Plan (2012). However, the definition of LTAAEL is not being changed and will still include the Cap scenarios. The draft order simplifies the wording in relevant inland regulated water sharing plans to remove reference to Cap compliance and retain only the non-compliance if the long-term average annual extraction exceeds the LTAAEL by 3%.</p>	<p>This change simplifies the LTAAEL compliance trigger by removing the additional reference to CAP compliance as it is already included in the LTAAEL definition.</p>

Table 4. Summary of changes related to specific access licence exemptions

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plan: Proposed changes apply only to the <i>Greater Metropolitan Region unregulated river</i>.</p> <p>Plan part: Operation of water allocation accounts and managing access licences</p>	<p>The department identified errors that relate to exceptions to the restrictions of take. We are proposing to change the wording so the exception for Energy Australia does not apply to the Specific access rule that surface water must not be taken under a major utility access licence in the Wywandy Water Source (subject to specific conditions under 36(4)(a)(b)(i)(ii)) and; the exception for Sydney Water Corporation does not apply to the taking of surface water by a major utility in the Upper Hawkesbury River Water Source at a rate exceeding 55ML/d when flows in the Lower Nepean are in A Class under 36(5).</p>	<p>These changes address errors in relation to an access rule.</p>

Table 5. Summary of changes related to overland flow and connectivity

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plans: These amendments are being applied to the northern inland regulated plans that provide connectivity outcomes in the Barwon Darling River, except for the Upper and Lower Namoi Regulated River plan that already includes these provisions.</p> <p>The plans included in this amendment are: <i>Gwydir regulated river,</i> <i>Macquarie and Cudgegong regulated river,</i> <i>NSW Border Rivers regulated river.</i></p> <p>Plan part: Limits to the availability of water</p>	<p>The amendment includes a change to an existing provision that restricts the take of overland flow under floodplain harvesting (regulated river) access licences if the volume of water stored in Menindee Lakes Storage is less than 250 gigalitres. This volume has been changed from 195 gigalitres. There is also a new provision that this volume may be updated following the replacement of the Water Sharing Plan for the NSW Murray and Lower Darling Regulated Rivers Water Sources 2016 if there is a change in the Menindee Storage volume requirement to protect the Lower Darling water sources and their dependent ecosystems. We will also include a new provision to review restrictions on the take of overland flow and supplementary water for the purpose of improving connectivity and protecting water dependent ecosystems considering the recommendations of the Connectivity Expert Panel by 31 December 2026 and amend the plan to establish alternative or additional restrictions of take.</p>	<p>We are taking action to improve water flowing across the connected catchments of the northern NSW Murray Basin at important times as part of the Northern Basin Connectivity Program.</p> <p>In August 2023, an Independent Connectivity Expert Panel was convened to provide independent expert advice on the adequacy of the provisions in providing for connectivity, including floodplain harvesting access rules.</p> <p>The purpose of these connectivity provisions are to meet the objectives to protect, enhance and restore water sources and their dependent ecosystems, including by ensuring the connectivity of rivers and wetlands.</p> <p>These changes were included in the remake of the Upper and Lower Namoi and including them in the other relevant inland regulated plans will improve outcomes and consistency.</p>
<p>Plans: Proposed provisions are being applied to all northern inland unregulated river plans. The Macquarie/Wambuul Bogan,</p>	<p>We are proposing a review of the plan rules to consider the flows required to support connectivity, protect the relevant water source,</p>	<p>These amendments are being included as part of the work being conducted through the Northern Basin Connectivity project.</p>

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Gwydir, Namoi and Barwon Darling unregulated river plans are being replaced in 2025/2026 and will include these provisions as part of that process. The plans included in this amendment are:</p> <p><i>Castlereagh unregulated,</i> <i>Intersecting streams unregulated,</i> <i>Border Rivers unregulated.</i></p> <p>Plan part: Amendment of this plan</p>	<p>and enable the amendment of the plan based on the review.</p>	<p>The project aims to improve connectivity across the northern basin and into the Barwon-Darling to improve outcomes such as reduced impacts from cease-to-flow periods, support water quality and reduce the risk of algal blooms forming and support fish migration.</p>

Table 6. Summary of changes related to minimum inflows review

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plans: Proposed amendments relating to the maintenance of water supply clauses apply to all regulated river plans, except for the Upper and Lower Namoi Regulated River plan that was amended in 2024 and doesn't require further updates. These are: <i>Peel regulated river,</i> <i>Bega River Area unregulated, regulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Richmond River Area regulated, unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Hunter regulated river,</i> <i>Paterson regulated river,</i> <i>Gwydir regulated river,</i> <i>Lachlan regulated river,</i> <i>Macquarie & Cudgegong regulated river,</i> <i>Murrumbidgee regulated river,</i> <i>NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated river,</i> <i>NSW Border Rivers regulated river,</i> <i>Belubula regulated river.</i></p> <p>Plan parts: System operation requirements Amendment of this plan</p>	<p>The amendment requires a review of the maintenance of water supply provision for regulated plans where it did not already appear. The date for the review to be conducted was adjusted for some plans. This is 30 June 2026 for the northern inland regulated plans and 31 October 2027 for the southern inland and coastal regulated plans. We also included a provision enabling amendments to be made based on the review that are reasonably necessary and do not jeopardise critical needs, for regulated plans where it did not already appear.</p> <p>We removed the provision (from plans where it appeared) stating that amendments resulting from the review could not alter the long-term average annual extraction.</p>	<p>These amendments are the basis of the work being conducted under the Minimum Inflows project. The changes improve consistency within regulated water sharing plans by applying the Minimum inflow review clauses included in northern inland regulated water sharing plans to other regulated water sharing plans where they are not already included.</p> <p>The Minimum Inflows review is a requirement in regulated plans, part of NSW Water Strategy action 4.2 and a Ministerial commitment made as an outcome of the discontinuance of the Border Rivers plan judicial review. The project is a key piece of work to incorporate climate change considerations into the water planning process.</p> <p>These amendments align the requirements for all regulated rivers with the updated schedule for delivery of the reviews.</p>

Table 7. Summary of changes related to prescribed wetlands

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plans: Proposed amendments apply to the inland unregulated river plans that were replaced in 2024: These are: <i>Castlereagh unregulated river,</i> <i>Intersecting Streams unregulated river,</i> <i>NSW Border Rivers unregulated river,</i> <i>Lower Murray-Darling unregulated river,</i> <i>North Western unregulated and fractured rock,</i> <i>Murray unregulated river.</i></p> <p>Plan parts: Amendment of this plan, Construction and use of water supply works, Access licence dealing rules.</p>	<p>We are proposing updates to apply a revised wetland definition of prescribed wetlands (changed from significant wetlands). Prescribed wetlands refer to a broader definition of wetlands that may require specific rules in water sharing plans. We will include a provision to ‘add, remove or modify the map showing the prescribed wetlands and by 1 July 2030, review the wetlands shown on the map to ensure they represent ecologically significant wetlands. We will also publish the review and consider amendments. The amendment will include the replacement of all references to ‘significant wetlands’ to ‘WSP prescribed wetlands’</p>	<p>These changes have arisen from feedback on the water sharing plans that were replaced in 2025 and provide the department with greater flexibility to consider stakeholder input to wetland mapping. There will be an opportunity for targeted consultation on specific wetland maps in early to mid-2026.</p>

Table 8. Summary of changes related to Yanco Creek Modernisation Project and access licence dealing rules

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plan: Proposed amendments apply only to the <i>Murrumbidgee regulated plan</i>.</p> <p>Plan part: Operation of water allocation accounts and managing access licences.</p>	<p>The Yanco Creek Modernisation Project is part of the NSW Government’s Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism Acceleration Program, that aims to modernise infrastructure in the Yanco Creek system. This includes the replacement and construction of new regulators, new environmental flow provisions and hydrometric measurement stations. The amendment includes a requirement that the Minister must prepare a ‘Yanco Creek System Operation Plan’ and publish on the Department’s website.</p>	<p>The changes will enable the development of the Yanco Creek Operation Plan as part of the Yanco Optimisation SDLAM project. More information on the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project is available here: https://www.water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au/sdlam/yanco-creek-modernisation-project</p>
<p>Plan: Proposed amendments apply only to the <i>Murrumbidgee regulated plan</i>.</p> <p>Plan part: Access licence dealing rules</p>	<p>We are adjusting the provision related to dealing rules in the Yanco system to include the share components acquired by the Water for Rivers program.</p>	<p>This amendment will address the potential for trade to occur when the works approval from certain water access licences are changed.</p>

Table 9. Summary of changes related to the protection of environmental water

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plans: Proposed amendments apply to plans that currently have access rules to protect Active Environmental Water (AEW) from take under floodplain harvesting access licences. These are: <i>Macquarie and Cudgegong regulated,</i> <i>Gwydir regulated.</i></p> <p>Plan part: Limits to the availability of water</p>	<p>We are proposing to amend the access rule provision relating to the protection of AEW from take under floodplain harvesting access licences by clarifying that water must not be taken under an access licence “when over bank flows have been caused by AEW present in that management zone”. This replaces “when there is only AEW present in the management zone”.</p> <p>We will also amend the definition of AEW in the Macquarie and Cudgegong regulated river plan to also include water that arises from releases made according to section 75 of active sub-allowance. Releases under section 75 active sub-allowance is already protected under the Macquarie/Wambuul Bogan unregulated plan and is also required to be protected from take under floodplain harvesting access licences under the Macquarie and Cudgegong regulated plan.</p>	<p>These amendments will improve implementation and operability.</p> <p>The update of the definition of AEW is to ensure consistency with the Macquarie/Wambuul Bogan unregulated plan.</p>
<p>Plan: Proposed amendments relate only to the <i>Murrumbidgee unregulated plan.</i></p> <p>Plan part: Schedule 2 Table A: Access licences exempt from specified access rules.</p>	<p>We are updating Schedule 2 Table A: Access licences exempt from specific access rules to include Murrumbidgee III stock and domestic licences. The inclusion of the 8 WALs in Murrumbidgee III will mean that they will be able to access water for specific purposes. We are also updating drafting errors in the Table relating to Flow class and Flow class thresholds.</p>	<p>These amendments enable access for some limited stock and domestic usage while subject to Cease to Pump rules.</p>

Table 10. Summary of changes related to the maintenance of in-river dams

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p>Plans: Proposed amendments relate to all inland and coastal unregulated plans and some coastal regulated plans. These are:</p> <p>Coastal plans <i>Bega River Area regulated, unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Richmond River Area regulated, unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Hunter regulated river,</i> <i>Paterson regulated river,</i> <i>Brunswick unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Clarence River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Deua River unregulated and alluvium</i> <i>Macleay unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Nambucca unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Snowy Genoa unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Towamba River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Tuross River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Clyde River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Bellinger River unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Central Coast unregulated and alluvial</i> <i>Hastings unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Coffs Harbour Area unregulated and alluvial,</i> <i>Greater Metropolitan Region unregulated,</i></p>	<p>We are updating particular provisions of water sharing plans that have the effect of prohibiting any maintenance or improvement of existing in-river dams, where the intention is such provisions should only prohibit the construction of new in-river dams.</p>	<p>The intention of these amendments is to ensure water sharing plan rules are consistent with the NSW Weirs Policy intent to discourage new or enlarged weirs and improve the environmental performance of existing weirs and do not unintentionally prohibit necessary maintenance or repair of water supply works and construction of environmentally positive projects.</p>

Plan and plan part	Change in amended plan	Basis for change
<p><i>Hunter unregulated and alluvial, Lower North Coast unregulated and alluvial, Tweed River Area unregulated</i></p> <p>Inland unregulated plans</p> <p><i>Murrumbidgee unregulated river, Castlereagh unregulated river, Intersecting Streams unregulated river, Lower Murray-Darling unregulated river, Murray unregulated river, Northwestern unregulated and fractured rock, Border Rivers unregulated river. Barwon Darling unregulated river, Lachlan unregulated river, Macquarie/ Wambuil Bogan unregulated river, Namoi/Peel unregulated river, Gwydir unregulated river</i></p>		

The process for changing water sharing plans

Amending a plan requires the approval of the Minister for Water and agreement of the NSW Minister for Environment (this is known as ‘concurrence’). Consistent with section 9 of the WM Act, when amending a plan the ministers must:

- take all reasonable steps to promote the water management principles of the WM Act and
- give priority to the principles relating to water sharing according to the order they are set out in under section 5 (3) of the WM Act.

The water sharing management principles under s5(3) of the WM Act are (in their order of priority):

1. Sharing water from a water source must protect the water source and its dependent ecosystems.

2. Sharing water from a water source must protect basic landholder rights.
3. Sharing or extraction of water under any other right must not prejudice the principles set out in points 1 and 2.

The Water group of the department worked with colleagues in the department's Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation group to develop the amendments before submitting the plan for the agreement and approval of the ministers.

More information

To read the water sharing plan amendment protocol, visit

<https://www.water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-08/wsp-amendment-protocol-fact-sheet.pdf>